

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)	
)	Docket No. 06-121
)	
Media Ownership)	
)	

COMMENTS OF
A PRIVATE CITIZEN ON

MEDIA OWNERSHIP RULES

AND

LOCALISM

As previously commented on by this citizen in Docket RM-10803 (Confirmation # 20041115101825) on the matter of Localism, as reviewed by the FCC in 2004, rules that permit large corporate ownership of broadcast facilities should be seen as counterproductive to serving in the public interest on matters of local interest and concern, and should be discouraged in future rule making policies. Specific examples of how this is true were cited, including hurricane coverage by Clear Channel Broadcasting that year which limited critical information available to the general public. Radio coverage offered by Clear Channel then, consolidated most, if not all, emergency weather communications while storms were threatening the area. These weather programs were disseminated from a single source and carried by multiple stations on both AM and FM, frustrating listener efforts to gather information relative to individual needs. Smaller radio stations also tended to broadcast simulcast audio programming provided by local television stations, further limiting the availability of information. Other stations disregarded the emergency conditions altogether, carrying regularly scheduled, often nationally syndicated, programming. These conditions suggest that consolidation and centralized control over programming content, whether through ownership or management, can and does result in reduced information relative to the community in general in times of urgent need.

Ownership of media in general, and radio in particular, by national corporations that offer talk and music programming featuring syndicated personalities and national playlists further denigrate the premise of local stations serving in the public interest. Music programming especially tends to ignore local talent

altogether, playing instead the same old songs, over and over again, all supported by national recording companies with national distribution systems.

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Contrary to the opinion of the National Association of Broadcasters, which replied in the matter of localism on November 1, 2004 (MB Docket No. 04-233) that “National playlists...have no discernible negative impact on localism”, local musicians know that with rare exception, virtually the only avenue available to them to have their music heard on local radio, is by signing with a national recording company and establishing a nationally recognized hit, which then in turn might be scheduled for airplay in the local market.

Commissioner Michael Copps is quoted in the St Petersburg Times (Airwaves Belong To Us All, April 20, 2007) as reminding readers that “American citizens, not TV and radio executives, own the airwaves” He asks if the public is “being well served by the media? Are (we) getting the diversity of viewpoint (we) want? Do news programs provide real insight into what’s going on in minority communities?” It is difficult to see how companies based in far away cities can positively respond to these questions.

These comments are submitted in opposition to any further deregulation of media ownership rules, and in support of FCC mandates to provide the infrastructure for greater emphasis on local management and ownership of facilities that provide programming content via the public airwaves. After decades of continued concentration of these national resources by fewer and fewer commercial interests, a new era of greater diversity and opportunity for media ownership should be encouraged.

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